

Draft Action Research Report

Title –

E-Portfolios: Alternative for Student Assessment, Measuring Student Growth

Needs Assessment –

The need for e-portfolios became apparent to me after working in the district for 2 years. When my current group of 8th graders were preparing to go to the high school I was informed that all their current work saved on the district server would be deleted as they passed to the high school. I started to make some inquiries as to how students were assessed as they went on to the high school when there was nothing to compare to. I was informed that due to server space, it was not possible to retain all the work.

In order to determine the need for this type of assessment tool a survey will be used with both the students and the staff to determine understanding of the portfolio process and to determine the knowledge of using portfolios for assessment. I located numerous survey examples to build my survey questions to include:

- What is an Electronic Portfolio?
- Why should I create an electronic portfolio?
- How do I get started in creating my own personal electronic portfolio?
- How does my educational institution get started in implementing electronic portfolios?
- What technology tools can I/we use to create electronic portfolios? Do you have any recommendations for portfolio software?
- What do I put into an electronic portfolio?
- How do I publish my electronic portfolio?
- What evidence is there that e-portfolios are beneficial to student learning?
- How does one assess a student's portfolio?

The survey results will be used to present to the campus admin to gain support to advance the planning process for the development of strategies to facilitate the creation of digital portfolios. The teacher survey will help create a standardized assessment tool.

Further inquiries with the Tech support staff indicated that many of these students will lose access to saved work due to limited server space. This eliminates the opportunity to be assessed in the future with real and authentic work. The use of technology has

created an environment where students can continually edit and re-work artifacts previously created. E-portfolios and adequate storage space provides the opportunity for students documentation of lifelong learning.

Objectives and Vision of the action research project. (ELCC 1.1) –

Vision:

Within the next five years, Liberty Hill Junior High will use digital portfolios as an alternative assessment tool for student work and will establish the means for students to archive examples of student work that demonstrates growth and understanding of concepts needed to be productive in the 21st Century marketplace.

Student Objectives:

1. Students will understand why and how digital portfolios are used.
2. Students will be able to create digital portfolios with a collection of work from core subject areas and electives.
3. Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills by choosing items to place in the portfolio based on established learning objectives.
4. Students will establish the practice of reflection of their own work as a learning practice.

Staff Objectives:

1. Staff will use portfolios to assess student growth over time
2. Staff will improve learning effectiveness and management through portfolio assessment.
3. Staff will establish the practice of reflection and evaluation as a teaching practice.

Review of the Literature and Action Research Strategy –

The use of digital portfolios provides students with an environment where they can collect their work and demonstrate learning over time. Solomon and Schrum (2007) suggest that electronic portfolios allows students to highlight achievements, reflect on learning, set goals for future learning and celebrate achievement through the process sharing work with peers and others that can provide formative feedback on learning (171). They offer several comparisons of the traditional portfolio versus the electronic as an assessment tool. One comparison support the idea that the electronic portfolio encourages lifelong learning due to maintaining the portfolio and attached artifacts over

time versus the traditional development of a portfolio at the end of a course which is used for the assessment and typically laid aside (172). "EPs are linked to a student's ability to self-regulate their learning and to enhance their meaningful learning of important educational skills and abilities, especially literacy skills' (Abrami, Wade, Pillay, Aslan, Bures, & Bentley, 2008).

The literature review produced numerous surveys that have been done and will be used as basis for the development of the survey that will be used for this research plan. Related surveys have been conducted by Ritzhaupt, Singh, Seyferth, and Dedrick, R. (2008). Another survey developed by Nathan Garrett for Claremont Graduate University provides questions to include ownership, peer learning, ease of use, learning effect, social effect, user satisfaction, and continued use (2009).

Dr. Helen Barrett is a noted educator and expert on the use of digital portfolios. In a recent contribution to the book *Education for a Digital World: Advice, Guidelines, and Effective Practice from Around the Globe* published by the Province of British Columbia, she notes that the use of digital portfolios are referenced in the 2011 U. S. National Educational Technology Plan (NETP). Dr. Barrett proposes, "there should be two different environments for the use of digital portfolios: one that is student-centered, that allows personalization and communication; and another that can be used to hyperlink into student portfolios to "harvest" assessment data, without interfering with the student-centered representation of learning" (Barrett, 2011, section 4).

The action research is currently in the beginning phase of approvals and development of the surveys. The collaborative team currently consists my the campus tech instructional, campus admin, and myself. There is a recognized to move forward with the vision of developing electronic portfolios for students and staff. Dr. Barrett closes her book chapter with these words, "My final wish to you is that all your electronic portfolios (and social networking) become dynamic celebrations and stories of deep learning across the lifespan" (Barrett, 2011, final section). I believe that digital portfolios will encourage and expand the concept of life-long learning.

Articulate the Vision (ELCC 1.2) –

I commonly remind my students about the importance of effective file management. This allows you to access and revise previously created documents for additional purposes. I share my personal slogan with my students, "If it's worth creating, it's worth saving." The primary purpose for my research is to assist the staff in learning how to use digital portfolios for assessment. Secondary, to this is the need for the district to establish a protocol to be able to save student work K-12. Our current environment is experiencing a shortage of storage on local servers so the follow-up to this research will be to lead an initiative to seek out other alternative.

I will plan to survey both the staff and students on my primary campus to assess understanding of digital portfolios and how they can be used to assess students. I have created a collaboration forum on our Project Share site in the district. I will plan to use the collaboration tool to report the phased results and to solicit input from peers. I will plan to share my final results at a predetermined time as agreed on with the building admin. Results will also be reported to the district administration with a formal presentation using a technology presentation tool in addition to providing a summary of the data and process in a brochure format.

Manage the organization (ELCC 3.1) –

The first step of the project was to determine a need. With the support and collaboration of my site mentor and campus administration this was the easy part. They were both in agreement that my proposal is both timely and has an authentic opportunity to affect student learning. The next step is to develop surveys that will be soliciting input from students and staff. The surveys will need approval based on the local IRB policy concerning the gathering of information from students. I need the support and collaboration of the campus Tech Instructionalist, campus administration and district Curriculum director.

The next step is to report the findings from the survey and communicate my vision and objectives for establishing a protocol for developing digital portfolios for students that can be used by staff as an alternative assessment tool. I will invite interested peers to work collaboratively to create a standardized rubric for assessment.

At this time I don't anticipate this project to be affected monetarily. The principal investment will be in time and effort to plan, produce and report on the findings. Technology tools will be used to create and disseminate the surveys. School district approved communication tools will be used to solicit information from students. This will supply a safe, monitored environment for students to participate in the survey.

This project is directly related to a focus on student learning. A primary objective is to educate students on the value of reflective practices to demonstrate knowledge and communicate abilities.

Manage Operations (ELCC 3.2) –

The project will be a collaborative effort with my campus technology instructional, campus administrator, collaboration community and me. The collaborative group will be established using the Texas Project Share community environment to communicate the scope and sequence and to get peer review for all aspects of the project to include the survey for staff and students, and the disaggregation of the results. District policy for information collection will be obtained through approvals from the campus principal and curriculum coordinator.

I don't anticipate conflicts. I believe if the scope and sequence of the project is clearly communicated the communication process will be established to support the collaborative effort for addressing questions, concerns and changes to the plan.

Respond to Community Interest and Needs (ELCC 4.2) –

The protocol that will be established as a result of the project will be legitimate for all types and levels of learners. Students with exceptional needs will gain the opportunity to be assessed using an alternative method of assessment. The e-portfolios will also provide the means to demonstrate growth in skills and learning for all students. Children are engaged when they can use technology so the use of e-portfolios creates an authentic environment to create and save. I tell my students often, "If it's worth creating, it's worth saving".

All students will be able to use the reflective practice to improve language skills while the work they do can be collected to show growth over time. Students will fine arts

abilities will be able to create documentation of their work in an electronic format that can be shared with peers and as evidence of ability for higher education applications.

The specific needs of the school district will be to adopt a philosophy that makes the retention of student work a priority. This will necessitate the district to find alternative storage mediums for data such as the collaborative tool provided by the Texas Education Agency initiative Project Share.

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